

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3607

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

USIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: POMPIDOU NEWS CONFERENCE: FRENCH PRESS REACTION

SUMMARY: "NOTHING NEW" EASILY CHARACTERIZES VERDICT OF FRENCH COMMENTATORS ASSESSING INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS SECTION OF POMPIDOU NEWS CONFERENCE. FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY, IN VIEW OF SEVERAL, IS CURRENTLY DOMINATED BY "WAIT AND SEE" ATTITUDE. IN PARIS MORNING PRESS, NEARLY ALL HEADLINES ON POMPIDOU REMARKS WENT TO DOMESTIC ISSUES. ONE OBSERVER FELT THAT WHAT DID EMERGE ON INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS SHOWED NEW QUEST FOR "CONCILIATION AND DIALOGUE". BUT LE MONDE EDITORIAL RAPPED POMPIDOU FOR BACKING AWAY FROM NUMBER OF EUROPEAN ISSUES WICH ARE RIPE FOR INITIATIVE. END SUMMARY.

1. THOUGH INTERNATIONAL SITUATION OFFERED POMPIDOU AN "EXTEN-

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SIVE CHOICE OF PROBLEMS," WROTE FIGARO'S ROGER MASSIP, AS WELL

AS THE CHANCE "FIRMLY TO MARK POSITION OF FRENCH GOVERNMENT ON EACH IN A WORLD DOMINATED BY U.S. AND SOVIET UNION, WE REGRETFULLY NOTE THAT THIS BROAD CHOICE AND THESE POSSIBILITIES WERE NOT EXPLOITED AS WE HAD WISHED." GENERAL IMPRESSION LEFT BY PRESIDENT, SAID MASSIP, WAS THAT FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY "IS NOW DOMINATED BY ONE MAJOR CONCERN -- TO WAIT AND SEE". SIMILAR VIEW EMERGED FROM COMMENTARY BY PHILIPPE TESSON IN COMBAT: "PRESIDENT OBVIOUSLY HAD NOTHING TO SAY YESTERDAY... HE MERELY REVIEWED PROBLEMS WITH A KIND OF SOVEREIGN INDIFFERENCE... HE IS WAITING FOR EVENTS AND JUST POSTPONING DEADLINES..."

2. LES ECHOS FELT SAME WAY ("NO NEW INFORMATION") BUT ADDED IN A SEPARATE ARTICLE: "THE STRESS AGAIN ON THE NECESSITY OF AMERICAN TROOPS IN EUROPE AND ON THE REJECTION OF ANY UNDERSTANDING AMONG THE NINE AGAINST THE U.S., THE DESIRE FOR PEACE IN RELATIONS WITH GERMANY AND THE CONCERN FOR COMPROMISE IN MONETARY DISCUSSIONS, MARK A NEW SEARCH FOR CONCILIATION AND DIALOGUE."

3. ON MONETARY COMMENTS BY POMPIDOU, GAULLIST ORGAN LA NATION DUTIFULLY ELABORATED THEIR ESSENCE: "FRANCE INTENDS EXCHANGE RATES TO BE ADJUSTABLE 'IN CASE OF NEED' (BUT) IT REMAINS TO AGREE ON WHAT THIS MEANS... IT IS REALISTIC ALSO TO REALIZE THAT, SINCE CENTRAL BANKS MUST HAVE AS RESERVES SOMETHING OTHER THAN YEN, D-MARKS, FRANCS, OR DOLLARS, A 'NEUTRAL' INSTRUMENT IS NEEDED. GOLD CAN AND MUST BE PARTIALLY THIS INSTRUMENT... BUT REALISM ALSO MAKES IT IMPERATIVE TO DEFINE NEW, MORE ARTIFICIAL RESERVED INSTRUMENT... WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS (POMPIDOU'S) INSISTENCE THAT NO COUNTRY -- THE U.S. FOR EXAMPLE -- SHOULD CONTROL THE ISSUANCE OF THESE NEW-LOOK SDR'S, ISSUED BY AN IMF REORGANIZED SO THAT NO COUNTRY -- THE US FOR EXAMPLE -- COULD MANIPULATE IT; AN IMF WHOSE HEADQUARTERS SHOULD BE LOCATED ELSEWHERE THAN IN WASHINGTON." CATHOLIC LA CROIX, UNDER A HEADLINE SAYING "GOODBYE, MR. RUEFF*", OBSERVED THAT POMPIDOU'S VIEWS ARE FAR REMOVED FROM THOSE OF THE GAULLE, WHO PROJECTED THE THESES OF JACQUES RUEFF AND NEVER SHRANK FROM FORECASTING DIRE CONSEQUENCES IF GOLD DID NOT BECOME BASIS FOR MONETARY SYSTEM. "FOR DE GAULLE, TO SPEAK ON MONETARY QUESTIONS WAS TO DENOUNCE THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DOMINATION OF THE U.S.", PAPER SAID, ADDING THAT IF POMPIDOU'S VIEWS DIFFER, IT IS BECAUSE CLOCK HAS MOVED ON SINCE 1969. "THIS CHANGE OF TONE IS VERY IMPORTANT,"

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LA CROIX DECLARED, BUT IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF THIS "POLICY OF THE POSSIBLE" GETS RESULTS OR IS REDUCED TO A "SERIES OF CONCESSIONS TO THE U.S., WHICH HOLDS THE MASTER TRUMPS". PAUL FABRA, ECONOMIC EDITOR OF LE MONDE, (WHOSE QUESTION ELICITED POMPIDOU'S REMARKS ON MONETARY SITUATION) WAS DISAPPOINTED TO SEE HIM EVOKING "RISKS" OF CURRENT STATE OF MONETARY AFFAIRS AS A "SMOKE SCREEN DESIGNED TO MASK AN INGLORIOUS AND BASICALLY UNNECESSARY ADHERENCE TO CONFORMISM", AND ATTACKED HIM ON SUCH SPECIFIC

POINTS AS TO HOW CONSOLIDATION OF DOLLAR BALANCES CAN BE ACHIEVED."

4. NEARLY ALL HEADLINES IN PARIS PRESS WERE CAPTURED BY POMPIDOU COMMENTS ON INTERNAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC QUESTIONS, AND THE BULK OF EDITORIAL COMMENT WAS ALSO IN THAT DIRECTION (SEE SEPTTEL). THROUGH MUCH OF IT RAN THEME THAT A PRIMARY POMPIDOU AIM WAS TO SHOW HIMSELF TO THE PUBLIC AND TO EXHIBIT HIS APPARENT GOOD STATE OF HEALTH.

5. PRESIDENT'S REMARKS ON EUROPE DREW DISDAIN FROM LE MONDE, WHOSE FRONT-PAGE EDITORIAL SAID "EUROPE IS MARKING TIME, AND IT ISN'T MR. POMPIDOU'S NEWS CONFERENCE WHICH WILL GET IT OUT OF ITS IMMOBILISM." PAPER DECLARED POMPIDOU IS WELL AWARE OF "THREAT OF DILUTION" POSED FOR EUROPE BY SOVIET-AMERICAN ENTENTE, BY MONETARY DISORDER AND BY WASHINGTON'S "PRESSURE" TO REVITALIZE THE ALLIANCE. YET, IT SAID, POMPIDOU CLAIMED INABILITY TO TAKE DECISIONS ALONE, DESPITE FACT THAT COPENHAGEN MEETING PROVED EUROPE'S ABILITY TO REACH COMMON POSITIONS ON IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS. "WE COULD HAVE HOPED THUS FOR A FRENCH INITIATIVE", SAID LE MONDE, AND LISTED AREAS WHERE INITIATIVE WOULD BE WELCOME. FIRST IS EUROPEAN UNION; PAPER QUOTED POMPIDOU THAT "FRANCE IS NOT HOSTILE TO IT" AND ASKED: "BUT IS THIS TO SUPPOSE THAT THE PROBLEM HAS BEEN SETTLED?" SECOND IS EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT; POMPIDOU, SAID PAPER, FEELS PARLIAMENT CAN ONLY COME "WHEN THERE IS REAL EUROPEAN POLICY, WHEN THE PROBLEM OF EUROPEAN DEFENSE WILL POSED", AND ASKED: "BUT ISN'T THIS ESCAPING FROM THE OBSTACLE?... THESE PROBLEMS ARE BEING POSED TODAY. ISN'T THIS ONE OF THE REASONS WHY A 'EUROPEAN POLICY' IS NECESSARY?" "LE MONDE FELT IT IS 'FALSE' TO TRY TO GIVE PRIORITY EITHER TO INSTITUTIONS OR POLICIES. 'THE ONLY WAY IS TO GO IN BOTH DIRECTIONS AT ONCE. AND THERE WE CAN REGRET THE ABSENCE OF BOLDNESS, AND APPARENTLY EVEN OF DESIRE, ON MR. POMPIDOU'S PART.' IRWIN

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